

## *Reflections from the 2011 Summer Camping Season*



# Volunteer Voices

My week at Camp Civitan will definitely be one that I will remember forever. I came to this camp nervous and unaware of what to expect. I was also a little afraid and unsure what to think of people with disabilities. Now that camp is over my view has completely changed. I no longer feel awkward and uneasy around people with disabilities. I think they are fantastic and caring people with huge, loving hearts. I think more people should be as adoring and non-judgmental as they are.

—Alison B.

This was the third week of my fourth year volunteering with Camp Civitan. With each passing week I gain more experience and learn more about disabilities. I bond more with the campers, and it impacts me a little more. But ultimately with each passing week I grow more as a person...Describing my experience in words really can't be done, except to say, Camp Civitan has changed my life more than anything I have ever done. My favorite thing about camp is that no matter what you have going on in your life, what things may be wrong at home, what your disability is, or how different from others you are, when you get to camp, none of it matters. Everyone accepts you, no one judges you. Everyone wants to help you succeed, and everyone comes together as a family.

—Elizabeth A.

Camp Civitan doesn't only provide a great time, but it gives you life lessons and experience I wouldn't trade in for the world. I have grown so much as a person and individual after volunteering with all of the special campers, who really have so much to offer. I feel so blessed to get the chance to come up here, and I can't wait until I can come again next summer. It is like a second family when I am here, and I feel like one of the luckiest people to have that. They say we're the reason campers have fun and grow while they are here, but it is because of the campers that I keep wanting to return.

—Kelsey S.



I have most definitely been impacted and changed by this experience. From the very beginning of my camp experience I have received nothing but wonderful feelings... Each one of the campers is wonderful and soulful, and if I have learned anything it is that the campers and even staff at Civitan are more beautifully human than most people I've ever known. I love people and I love to work, but I most love losing myself in a world where encouragement is constant and character is endless. I think if the campers have gotten as much joy out of the past week as I have, camp was most definitely a success. –Laura B.



I definitely feel I have been impacted by this experience. I have met a range of people, from very high functioning to very low, and it has been very educating. I feel I know a lot more about the different types of disabilities and it was a comfort to see that although life seems to have dealt a lot of these people a more difficult hand, they can find friendship, happiness, and acceptance here. I didn't know a lot about people with disabilities before this experience, and after being wholly immersed in this world for a week, my eyes have been opened. –Meredith M.



My camp experience has changed my outlook on life. Now every time I say, "I can't," I have to rethink it because they say, "I can," even when they can't. –Aubrey B.

Civitan has been an amazing experience for me, though not without challenges. I know I have gained so much since my arrival two weeks ago... The campers made my experience so wonderful. If there was ever a moment when I doubted myself or longed for the comforts of home, I would just take a look around at the amazing campers and staff, who despite their overt differences can come together for a week to form a Civitan family. It's truly remarkable, and never in my life have I been a part of something so powerful and unique. Thank you for this wonderful experience. –Rachel S.

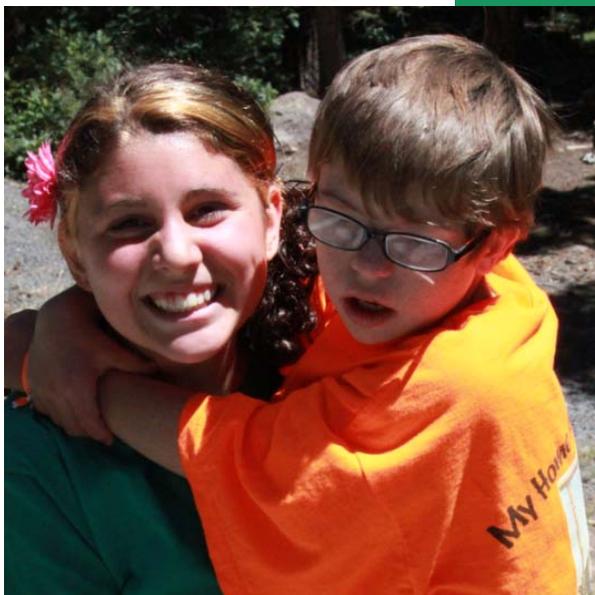


Camp Civitan changed the way I see the world. –Colt C.

I stepped onto the bus in Phoenix with little experience dealing with people with disabilities. The only people I knew were my friend and his brother. I knew little of the world I was about to enter into. One of the first and most memorable experiences I had was at the Civitan Office; here a number of the staff mistook me for a camper. I was shocked, confused, and even a little hurt. How could they mistake me for a disabled person? I figured it would be easy to distinguish who was who. I was mistaken. As the week progressed and I spent hours upon hours working with all kinds of people with disabilities, I found that the easily identifiable border in my mind that separated “normal” from “different” was melting away. The final tipping point occurred when I was floating

in the Williams Aquatic Center pool, watching campers frolic in the water. My provider and other staff helped lower a large man from his wheelchair into the pool so that he could partake in the festivities. Once he was in the water, we began conversing, and it was obvious that he had some cognitive delays. As our conversation progressed he began talking about his schooling, he was in high school. I figured he was held back because of his delays, so I was curious about his age. I had guessed he was in his twenties or thirties, but he was instead the same age as me. It was then that I finally realized that none of the campers were too different from me. The most valuable part of this trip has been that my view of people with disabilities has been altered. I have realized that people with disabilities are not to be alienated or pushed away, or even pitied, but instead to be helped, included, and loved as equals. –Alex G.

I will forever be changed by this beyond incredible experience, value life in a whole new way, and respect all walks of life. –Megan S.



Coming to Camp Civitan has been one of the best decisions I have ever made. I came because I heard my friends' experience, and now I am able to leave and share my own experience with others. I am truly lucky that I was able to spend a week with these amazing campers; they have so much to teach us and each one of them has become a

friend of mine. I have learned to humble myself and be patient, because when you actually listen to these individuals, you can see things through a new perspective. I hope that many people will decide to come to this camp, because it

really makes you cherish and be grateful for every moment. This week at Camp Civitan has changed my life for good, and I will never forget it. –Sheridan W.

*For more information regarding volunteer opportunities, please contact Megan Reddell, (602) 953-2944 or [mreddell@campcivitan.org](mailto:mreddell@campcivitan.org).*